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ABSTRACT

Yearly administrations of a standardized achievement test are a part of the educational process in many school districts in the United States. The Systemwide Testing Program in the Austin Independent School District Office of Research and Evaluation has gradually developed a process and support materials whereby the test administrations are a tool for evaluation and also a means of informing, preparing, and involving teachers, parents, and the community in this part of the educational endeavor. To provide for enrichment of teaching techniques and improvement of communication patterns, the following materials (included as attachments to the document) are discussed: (1) public service announcements; (2) school district cable television; (3) parents' role in preparing students for testing; (4) test brochures; (5) school board presentations; (6) teachers' year-long plan; (7) preparing students; (8) testing calendar, and (9) newsletter for test coordinators. (PN)

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Achievement Test Preparation:
A Year-Long Goal,
Not a Last-Minute Thought

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Achievement Test Preparation: A Year-Long Goal, Not a Last-Minute Thought

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Austin Independent School District

Austin, Texas

Yearly administrations of a standardized achievement test are a part of the educational process in many school districts in the U.S. For many students, teachers, and administrators those testing days are ones which must be "endured." Too often the tests themselves are the end - the evaluation of the student, school, or district. Too infrequently are the tests the beginning - the basis for improvement of teaching strategies and communication patterns within the school system and between the school system and the community it serves. The Systemwide Testing Program in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) has gradually developed a process and support materials whereby the test administrations are a tool for evaluation and also a means of informing, preparing, and involving teachers, parents, and the community in this part of the educational endeavor.

Test Preparation - How Much Is Too Much?

Standardized achievement testing should not be an isolated part of the schooling process, but one important means of assessing how well the school system (students, teachers, administrators, and parents) is providing its students with an educational experience. Many school districts focus attention on preparing for the "test" during a relatively short period of time immediately prior to the test administration. This approach does not promote optimal understanding and usefulness of the whole testing process. The testing process can be used to encourage effective teaching strategies and communication patterns throughout the school year.

Students in AISD receive test preparation through the use of practice tests and simple scripts on various aspects of testing (see Christner, Matter, and Ligon, 1981, and Ligon and Jones, 1981). These materials are presented to students the week prior to testing. While many districts provide this level of test preparation for the active participants in the testing process, the students, few disticts have gone the next step, that of providing support materials for students, school staff, or parents to help make the testing process itself an educational process. The following materials have been developed in AISD to help provide for enrichment of teaching techniques and improvement of communication patterns and understanding of the school system by the system staff and the community at large.

Communication with Public and Parents

1. *Public Service Announcements (PSA's).*

   Television PSA's provide the dates of testing and basic hints on how parents and others can help students do their best during the testing (see Attachment A). AISD has been fortunate to obtain the services of the last two state governors, city mayor, university athletic coach, a noted university professor (Barbara Jordan), a professional baseball player (Don Baylor), and a local TV/radio personality in making PSA's. These are aired on local commercial channels beginning about two weeks prior to the first day of testing and continue through the last test day.

2. *School District Cable Television Channel.*

   AISD recently received its own cable TV channel. An Office of Research and Evaluation testing staff member starred in a half-hour tape, hosted by an elementary principal, on understanding grade equivalents and percentiles. This tape was broadcast over the district's channel several times a day (morning, afternoon, and evening) for a three-week period. The elementary schools scheduled staff meetings at their convenience to view the tape as an inservice. Since this was broadcast over the cable, any Austin citizen who subscribes to the cable could have watched the inservice.

   The AISD cable channel also announces the testing dates and other items related to testing on information boards which appear periodically throughout the day (see Attachment B).

3. *Parents Role in Preparing Students for Testing.*

Test preparation is not the sole domain of school personnel. Parents are an integral part of the testing process, too. A handout on the parent's role (Attachment C) was developed for distribution at PTA meetings, etc., briefly describing activities for parents to help their students at testing time and how to use test information throughout the school year.

4. *Test Brochures.*

Each student tested receives a student/parent brochure (Attachment D). This brochure briefly describes the test taken by the student, reports the scores received, and describes the use of the scores by teachers and others in the school. Brochures are developed separately for senior high, junior high, elementary (English and Spanish versions), and kindergarten (English and Spanish versions).

5. *School Board Presentations.*

Yearly presentations to the School Board provide an avenue for public reporting of test results and a discussion of the influence of programs and policies on achievement. The published school and district summary achievement reports are available for public use at the School Board office, the AISD professional library, and the ORE offices.

Communications with Students and School Staff

6. *Teachers' Year-Long Plan.*

The AISD testing staff subscribes to the idea that maximum benefit of test preparation activities cannot be obtained unless these are incorporated into regular classroom activities throughout the year. Student and teacher test anxiety can be reduced if preparation for the achievement testing is a year-long goal, not a last-minute thought. A handout for teachers (Attachment E) lists activities which they may use throughout the school year to improve their students' test-taking skills. An all-purpose answer sheet (Attachment F) is available to help students obtain additional practice with a separate answer sheet.

7. *Taking the Tests Seriously.*

Sometimes students are required to participate in activities without much knowledge of how their performance will be used. This was the case in AISD in the past with the high school testing. Now, AISD high school teachers communicate information to their students on how the test results are used for student, school, and district decision-making, stressing the importance of taking the tests seriously (Attachment G).

8. *Testing Calendar.*

Systemwide testing dates need to be determined for the upcoming school year as early as possible and communicated to district personnel. This helps prevent conflicts with other activities and signifies that testing is an important event which others must plan around, not vice versa. In AISD principals, counselors, and central administrative staff receive a calendar (Attachment H) providing the dates for districtwide achievement testing, special program testing (e.g., Chapter 1), and contact persons for the testing activities.

9. *Newsletter.*

The testing program uses the Nuts and Bolts (Attachment I) to keep counselors and principals up-to-date on issues related to testing.

Conclusion

Most test preparation and information activities can be incorporated into regular classroom activities. Parent/school/community support for testing and a better understanding of test results are possible when the importance of testing is noted throughout the year and when these groups know that they have an important role in the testing process. The more the community and school system understand the tests and the testing process, the better they can meaningfully interpret the results and take corrective educational actions as needed.

The ORE Systemwide Testing staff has developed various materials and procedures for informing and assisting, but more are needed. One AISD school recently began using parts of a published set of test preparation materials. These teachers found it easier to use and adapt those materials than create those suggested in our handouts. Thus, our own test preparation activities need to be expanded, to provide not only the ideas, but more of the finished products which teachers can use directly.

References

Christner, C., Matter, K., and Ligon, G. Develop your own practice test when...a) You change achievement tests; b) your needs are unique; c) you don't have much money; d) all of the above. Paper presented at the 1981 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Ligon, G. and Jones, P. Preparing students for standardized testing: One district's perspective. Paper presented at the 1981 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Attachments

A - Public Service Announcements
B - AISD Cable Channel Information Board
C - Parents' Role in Preparing Students
D - Achievement Test Brochure
E - Teachers' Year-Long Plan
F - All-Purpose Answer Sheet
G - Preparing Students to Take the STEP
H - Testing Calendar
I - Nuts and Bolts Newsletter

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

TESTING PSA'S FEATURING GOVERNOR MARK WHITE

SCRIPT #1

As Governor of Texas, I need complete and current information before I make a decision. An important piece of information for teachers, parents, and students comes from the annual achievement testing in our public schools. I want to encourage all students to be in school and ready to take these tests. The results are important to all of us.

SCRIPT #2

Part of the responsibility of being Governor is to insure that Texas is providing the best possible education for our children. Annual achievement tests help us to maintain our quality of education by furnishing valuable information about students' progress.

Parents and students also have a responsibility. Won't you help us continue to make Texas a leader in education by encouraging your children's best efforts during this important.achievement testing?

SCRIPT #3

As Governor of Texas, I know that our educational system is responsible for training tomorrow's leaders. Achievement tests are an important measure of students' success.

It is only with accurate evaluations that we can continue to implement challenging programs in our schools. Won't you help our future leaders reach their goals by encouraging your children's best efforts during their important achievement tests.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

Governor White PSA

Script #2

Caption at bottom of screen

GOVERNOR MARK WHITE

Tag at end on screen

Austin Independent School District Texas Assessment of Basic Skills Grades 3, 5, and 9 February 14-18	show for 3 seconds
Austin Independent School District Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Grades 7 and 8 February 15-17	show for 4 seconds

Voiceover at end

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills
Grades 3, 5, and 9
February 14-18

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
Grades 7 and 8
February 15-17

Airing dates

February 9-17, 1983

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

TESTING PSA'S FEATURING DON BAYLOR

CAPTION AT BOTTOM OF SCREEN: DON BAYLOR
New York Yankees

SCRIPT #1

Whether your job is playing baseball, or going to school, we all do our best when we are well prepared. Students in the public schools will soon be taking their yearly achievement tests. It's important for you to be in school and be prepared to do your best. When your achievement tests are given, get a good night's sleep, eat breakfast, and be at school on time.

SCRIPT #2

As a professional baseball player, I must be prepared every time I take the field. As a father, I want to help my son be prepared to do his best in school. Public school students will soon be taking their yearly achievement tests. When the achievement tests are given, be sure your child gets a good night's sleep, eats breakfast, and arrives at school on time. I'm going to see that my son does..

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

Don Baylor PSA

Introduction

Here is Austin High graduate and member of the New York Yankees Don Baylor speaking for Austin's public schools.

On screen: AISD seal or an AISD elementary school

Caption at bottom of screen

DON BAYLOR
NEW YORK YANKEES

Tag and voiceover at end

Austin Independent School District
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
Grades K-6
April 19-21

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

TESTING PSA'S FEATURING CACTUS PRYOR

SCRIPT #1

We Texans are proud of many things. Here in Austin one of the things we are most proud of is our public schools. These schools maintain their excellence partly through yearly achievement testing. Won't you encourage your child to get a good night's sleep, eat breakfast, and be at school on time when the achievement tests are given?

SCRIPT #2

Students in Austin's public schools will soon be taking their annual achievement tests. These tests provide current and accurate information on each child's progress - information important to you, your child, teachers, and school staff. Please help your child be prepared to do his or her best. When the tests are given, make sure your child gets a good night's sleep, eats breakfast, and is at school on time. Thank you.

SCRIPT #3

Getting a good education is important. One way that you, your parents, and your teachers can measure progress in school is with the annual achievement tests. Students in Austin's public schools will soon be taking these tests. When the tests are given, be prepared to do your best. Get a good night's sleep, eat breakfast, and be at school on time.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

Cactus Pryor PSA

Tag and voiceover at end

Austin Independent School District
Sequential Tests of Educational Progress
Grades 9-12
April 6 and 7

Introduction

Here is local radio and TV personality and author, Cactus Pryor, speaking for Austin's public schools.

On Screen: an AISD high school or AISD seal

A.I.S.D.
CABLE CHANNEL 8
CHARACTER GENERATED INFORMATION FORM

Date Submitted _____ Character Generated Entry Date _____ Date to Delete _____

Character Generated Information Requirements:
maximum 8 lines per page
maximum 32 characters/spaces per line

Message to be Cablecast

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
1.)							A	C	H	I	E	V	E	M	E	N	T		T	E	S	T	I	N	6							
2.)				I	O	W	A		T	E	S	T	S		O	F		B	A	S	I	C		S	K	I	L	L	S			
3.)										G	R	A	D	E	S		7		A	N	D		8									
4.)									F	E	B	R	U	A	R	Y		1	5		-		1	7								
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7.)		N	I	G	H	T	'	S		S	L	E	E	P	,		E	A	T		B	R	E	A	K	F	A	S	T	,		
8.)				A	N	D		B	E		A	T		S	C	H	O	O	L		O	N		T	I	M	E	.				

Approved By:

_____ *AISD Building Principal*
_____ *AISD Cabinet Member*
_____ *Jean Nipper, Coordinator*
_____ *Oscar Palomo, Senior Programmer*

Austin Independent School District
Media Production/Cable Television

17

Versión en español al otro lado

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

WHAT IS THE PARENTS' ROLE IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS?

1. Know when the testing is happening.

2. Know what tests or types of tests are being given.

3. Show an interest by talking to the child about ---

   a) when the testing is.
   b) what the teacher has said about the testing.
   c) whether the child needs anything for the test (pencils, erasers).

4. Emphasize the child's responsibility to try his/her best so the results will be as accurate as possible.

5. Be supportive. Communicate that the test is important but not to worry about it.

6. Understand that studying or cramming for a standardized test is not a good idea. These tests cover many topics, and last-minute studying will not help much, if any.

7. Have the child ready to take the test.

   a) Avoid events that might upset the child.
   b) Be sure the child gets a good night's sleep.
   c) Prepare a good breakfast.
   d) Be sure the child is at school on time.

8. After the test, ask how everything went. Tell the child that tests are important and that trying his/her best is a good sign of growing up.

9. Look for the results. When they arrive, discuss them with the child. Look for areas to be proud of and areas where the child might need to improve.

10. Attend a parent/teacher conference.

SOME REASONS WHY ACHIEVEMENT TESTING IS IMPORTANT

1. *Test scores tell us how much a student has learned compared to other students in the same grade.*

2. *Teachers use test results to plan instruction. We want to teach what students need to learn, not what they already know.*

3. *Our School Board uses test scores to decide how well our schools are doing. Test scores help them decide where improvement is needed.*

4. *Test scores in grades 8-12 are used to show which students have learned the basic skills in reading and math. Minimum competency levels must be met before graduation.*

DISTRITO ESCOLAR DE AUSTIN
Oficina de Investigación y Evaluación

¿QUÉ DEBEN HACER LOS PADRES PARA AYUDAR A SUS NIÑOS EN LA PREPARACIÓN DE LOS EXÁMENES REQUERIDOS POR EL DISTRITO ESCOLAR?

1. Saber cuando los exámenes se llevan a cabo.

2. Saber que exámenes o tipo de exámenes se estan administrando.

3. Demuestre a su niño interés acerca de:

   a) Cuando se dan los exámenes.
   b) Qué ha dicho la maestra sobre los exámenes.
   c) Qué necesita su niño para los exámenes (lápices, borradores).

4. Explique a su niño su responsabilidad de contestar lo mejor posible para que los resultados sean exactos.

5. Dele apoyo a su niño; comuníquele que el examen es importante pero que no debe preocuparse demasiado.

6. Estudiar a última hora para prepararse para los exámenes estandarizados no es recomendable. Estos exámenes cubren muchas areas y el estudio a última hora no ayudaría.

7. Prepare a su niño para tomar el examen.

   a) Evite situaciones que trastornen a su niño.
   b) Asegure que su niño duerma bien la noche anterior al examen.
   c) Prepare un buen almuerzo.
   d) Asegure que su niño llegue a la escuela a tiempo.

8. Despues del examen, preguntele a su niño como le fué. Digale que los exámenes son importantes y que tratar de hacer lo mejor posible es muestra de que está creciendo y aprendiendo a tomar responsabilidad por lo que hace.

9. Espere los resultados del examen. Cuando lleguen, hable con su niño y diríjale la atención a las areas en que puede estar orgulloso y a las areas en que puede mejorar.

10. Asista a una junta con la maestra de su niño.

ALGUNAS RAZONES POR LAS QUE LOS EXAMENES DE APROVECHAMIENTO SON IMPORTANTES

1. *Los resultados de los exámenes indican cuanto ha aprendido un estudiante en comparación con otros estudiantes en el mismo grado.*

2. *Los maestros usan los resultados de los exámenes para planear su instrucción. Se quiere enseñar a los estudiantes lo que necesitan aprender, no lo que ya saben.*

3. *La Junta Directiva (School Board) utiliza los resultados para establecer que tan bien están nuestras escuelas. Los resultados le ayudan a los miembros de la Junta Directiva a decidir si es necesario mejorar los programas.*

4. *Los resultados de los exámenes en los grados 8-12 se usan para saber cuales estudiantes han adquirido las habilidades básicas en lectura y matemáticas. Los estudiantes deben obtener un nivel mínimo de competencia en lectura y matemáticas antes de su graduación.*

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Research and Evaluation

Year Long Plan for Preparing Students for Standardized Testing

There are some activities which teachers may provide throughout the school year to improve students' test-taking skills--possibly even their scores on standardized tests.

In AISD, the seven most frequently observed problems which students have with standardized tests have been:

- Test Anxiety--being so concerned about their scores that students function below their true ability levels.
- Carelessness--being under motivated or having poor test-taking skills.
- Confusion--being overwhelmed by the unfamiliar procedures and item formats.
- Poor Use of Time--being too meticulous, not using time to recheck answers, etc.
- Lack of Skills--being too far below grade level to have the skills required to answer a reasonable number of test items. This category includes limited-English proficiency.
- Special Circumstances--being hindered in taking the test by unusual circumstances (e.g., illness, noise from outside the classroom, a defective test booklet, etc.).
- Handicapping Conditions--being physically, mentally, or emotionally handicapped to an extent that a valid test score is unlikely.

The real burden of overcoming these obstacles falls to the teacher; however, counselors, principals, resource teachers, and AISD testing staff can offer some assistance. Three problems--lack of skills, special circumstances, and handicapping conditions--require their own unique solutions; but, test anxiety, carelessness, confusion, and poor use of time can be combatted and reduced by teachers who give students experience in achievement-test-like situations throughout the school year. The key is not to allow taking a standardized test to be a unique experience.

Unit tests and classwork already occur in all teachers' classrooms; consequently, if these activities can provide experience and practice similar to taking standardized tests, then students may perceive standardized tests as less threatening and less confusing without the loss of valuable instructional time.

The following characteristics of standardized tests can be incorporated into unit tests and classwork.

- A Separate Answer Sheet
- A Wide Variety of Item Formats
- Time Limits (Many students do not have enough experience with set deadlines for completing an exercise.)
- Multiple-Choice Items (Please, however, remember that exclusive use of multiple-choice items does not allow students the challenge of total recall or of composing and writing sentences and paragraphs.)
- Difficult Items (An average student answers correctly 75% of the items on teacher-made tests but only 57% on the ITBS.)

These test-taking habits can also be taught and encouraged throughout the year.

- Leaving difficult items and working on easier ones, then returning to the difficult items.
- Going back to check answers if there is time available.
- Eliminating obviously incorrect choices, then choosing an answer from among those left.
- Using information in other items as clues to an item's answer.

A study by the Office of Research and Evaluation showed that other test-taking strategies were either of no help on the ITBS or were too complex to be used by most students.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

AUSTIN ★ TEXAS
STANDARD ANSWER SHEET

STUDENT NAME _____

STUDENT NUMBER _____

TEST _____
DATE _____
PERIOD _____
CLASS _____
TEACHER _____

1 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	21 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	41 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	61 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	81 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	22 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	42 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	62 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	82 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	23 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	43 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	63 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	83 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	24 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	44 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	64 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	84 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	25 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	45 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	65 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	85 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	26 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	46 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	66 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	86 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	27 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	47 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	67 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	87 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	28 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	48 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	68 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	88 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	29 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	49 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	69 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	89 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
10 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	30 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	50 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	70 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	90 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
11 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	31 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	51 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	71 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	91 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
12 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	32 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	52 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	72 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	92 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
13 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	33 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	53 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	73 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	93 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
14 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	34 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	54 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	74 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	94 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
15 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	35 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	55 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	75 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	95 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
16 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	36 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	56 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	76 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	96 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
17 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	37 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	57 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	77 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	97 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
18 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	38 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	58 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	78 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	98 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
19 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	39 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	59 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	79 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	99 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
20 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	40 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	60 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	80 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	100 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

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AISD ★ AISD

B2

PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS TO TAKE THE STEP

Why are students given the STEP?

The first step in the continuing process of improving education for a school district, a school, or a particular student, is to pinpoint problem areas. Standardized achievement tests such as the STEP are useful for this purpose. STEP scores yield an outline of how the achievement of AISD high school students compares to that of students across the country. This information is useful in several ways:

- to inform a student, and that student's parents, how the student performed in a variety of academic skills areas, compared to students nationwide;
- to inform a school of academic areas of relative strength and weakness. This information can be used in school planning and setting school goals;
- to inform the School Board of areas of strength and weakness in student achievement districtwide. This information can be used to make curriculum and textbook decisions, and in setting districtwide goals and priorities.

How can I encourage my students to take the STEP?

There are a few things *you* can do to encourage the students at your school to take the STEP:

- Maintain a positive, realistic attitude toward the testing. Taking the STEP can be tedious and difficult, like a great deal of other school work, but STEP scores are an important part of the student's records, the school's records, and the District's records.
- When you have contact with parents, let them know when the STEP tests are given, explain to them what the scores mean and how they are used, and encourage them to send their children to school on those days.
- Work with your students on developing some good test-taking skills (see page 2). Encourage them to see the STEP tests as a challenge--an opportunity to see how well they can do.

What types of test-taking skills do students need?

Students may need practice marking their answers on answer sheets and working under timed conditions. Here are some things you can do to help:

A. Below is a list of test-taking strategies. Discuss these with your students. Make a bulletin board display containing some of these ideas:

1) Use blunt #2 pencils. They do not break as easily, and it takes fewer marks to fill the bubble.
2) Mark only one answer per question. If the computer picks up two answers for a question, it counts the question as incorrect.
3) Erase changed answers completely. The computer may pick up a partially erased response as a second response to a question, and count it as incorrect.
4) Every fourth or fifth question, check to make sure you are on the right number on the answer sheet.
5) Put the answer sheet right next to the column of questions you are working on. This helps you keep your place in the booklet and work more quickly.
6) On the math sections, put your scratch paper under (or next to) the problem in the booklet to work out the answer. Do not waste time copying the whole problem onto your scratch paper. But remember not to mark in the test booklet.
7) The STEP is scored by counting the number of right answers. There is no penalty for guessing, so it is better to try to eliminate at least one option and make an educated guess at an answer than to leave it blank.

B. Occasionally throughout the year give multiple choice tests, seatwork, or homework in a standardized test format. Use computer answer sheets if possible to give your students some practice with them.

C. Time your tests or seatwork to get students used to working under time constraints.

D. The attitude that you convey toward the STEP is important. If students see that you think the STEP is too hard, or not important, then they will not take it seriously and they may not do their best. Probably the most constructive attitude you can have is, "This test may be too hard (or too easy), but it is important for the students to take it seriously and do the best that they can. This way their parents, next year's teacher, the School Board, and anyone else who uses these scores will get information that is as accurate as possible."

NUTS AND BOLTS OF TESTING

A BULLETIN FOR TEST COORDINATORS

VOLUME 4
GRADES 7-12 No. 1

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION - AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT August 18, 1982

Testing Calendar for 1982-83

Here is your 1982-83 Districtwide Secondary Testing Calendar. For easy reference, keep this in a convenient place. Contact persons for the various programs are listed at the bottom of the second page.

1982-83 SECONDARY TESTING CALENDAR

DATES	ACTIVITY	STUDENTS INVOLVED
August 23 - Continuous	Language Assessment Battery (LAB)	All students new to AISD who show a language other than English on the Survey of Home Languages
August 23 - Continuous	California Achievement Tests (CAT)	All new AISD students with a non-English response on the Survey of Home Languages and an English LAB score at or above the 23rd percentile.
September 7 - 17	Minimum Competency Testing	Senior transfers from outside AISD
November 1 - January 7	Minimum Competency Testing	Special sessions* (high school)
January 10 - 12	Minimum Competency Testing	Tutorial testing** (high school)
January 31 - February 11	Minimum Competency Testing	Senior transfers from outside AISD
February 14 - 18	Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS)	All grade 9 students (limited special education exemptions); optional for 10th - 12th grade students who have not demonstrated mastery
February 15 - 17	Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)	All grade 7 and 8 students (limited special education exemptions)
February 18 - 25	ITBS Make-Ups	Grade 7 and 8 students
March 1 - May 13	Minimum Competency Testing	Special sessions* (high school)
March 7 - 31	Language Assessment Battery (LAB)	All LEP pupils in grades 7-8 identified as potential LEP exits by their ITBS scores

DATES	ACTIVITY	STUDENTS INVOLVED
April 6 - 7	Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP)	All students in grades 9-12 (limited special education exemptions)
April 16 and 23	STEP Make-Ups	Students in grade 9-12
May 2 - 25	Language Assessment Battery (LAB)	All LEP students in grades 9-12 identified as potential LEP exits by their STEP scores
May 16 - 20	Minimum Competency Testing	All tutorial seniors
May 24 - 26	Minimum Competency Testing	Tutorial testing** (high school)

*SPECIAL SESSIONS - Students may attend if:

1) they have not yet met the competency requirements in reading/math,
2) they are not currently enrolled in reading/math tutorial, and
3) they have completed or are in the semester during which they complete four semesters of reading/language arts, or have earned or are in the semester during which they complete earning two units in math.

**TUTORIAL TESTING - Required of students enrolled in reading/math tutorial courses.

Program(s)	Test(s)	Contact Person	Telephone
Systemwide Testing	ITBS, STEP	Kevin Matter	458-1227
Minimum Competency	Minimum Competency	Kevin Matter	458-1227
Local/State Bilingual and LEP Identification	LAB, CAT	Jonathan Curtis	458-1228
State Compensatory Education	TABS	Evangelina Mangino	458-1227

NUTS AND BOLTS OF TESTING

A BULLETIN FOR TEST COORDINATORS

VOLUME 4
GRADES 7-8 NO. 1

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION - AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT November 18, 1982

The 1982-83 school year is moving rapidly along! Winter vacation is soon upon us - which means that spring achievement testing can't be far away! We've had one planning meeting for this year's ITBS testing, which is summarized here. If you have unanswered questions after reading this issue, call Kevin Matter or Glynn Ligon at 458-1227. Others probably have the same questions.

NOTES SUMMARIZING THE NOVEMBER 10 MEETING

Number of Test Administrators and Preslugged Answer Sheets

Please return the form distributed at the meeting indicating how many sets of test administration materials you will need for your teachers, counselors, and other staff who will help administer the ITBS. Be sure to note how your answer sheets should be preslugged--advisor, first period, etc.

Practice Tests

The practice test will be optional again this year, but recommended for new students. If you desire copies of the practice test, please include that information when you return the form mentioned above.

Draft of Test Results Brochure

A draft of the 1982-83 junior high achievement test results brochure has been distributed. Please review it and return your comments, suggestions, ideas, etc. to ORE by November 24.

Report Card on Materials Returned

This year we will be making schools aware of the conditions in which their test materials were returned after the testing. As you realize, close attention to procedures for materials distribution, collection, and return results in a more organized, effective test administration, as well as saving the District and your school valuable time and money. We hope this feedback helps improve future test administrations at your school.

ITBS Reports for 1982-83

The following junior high reports will be sent after the ITBS administration:

- Alphabetic Listing of Students by Grade (4 copies)
- Percentile Score Rank Order Listings by Grade for Reading Total, Language Total, and Math Total (4 copies)
- ITBS Gummed labels (3 copies)
- Classroom Skills Analysis Summaries (1 copy)
- Science Composite Score Rank Order Listing (4 copies)

To assist in scheduling, the following will be sent in early March:

- Alphabetic Listing of 1981-82 Fifth-Grade Scores for Students Assigned to their 1983-84 Junior High Campus (4 copies)

ITBS Reports for 1982-83 (Continued)

After the elementary ITBS testing, the following will be sent:

- Alphabetic and Rank Order (reading, language, and math) Listings of 1982-83 Sixth-Grade Scores for Students Assigned to 1983-84 Campus (4 copies)

Testing Timeline for 1982-83

Date	Activity
January 26	Junior High BTC Meeting: Receive Checklists/Materials
Week of January 31 - February 4	Receive ITBS Practice Tests
Week of February 7 - 11	Receive ITBS Answer Sheets
February 11	Receive ITBS Test Booklets
February 15 - 17	ITBS Administration
February 18 - 25	ITBS Make-ups
February 25	Deliver Answer Sheets to ORE; Test Booklets Picked Up
Week of February 28 - March 4	ITBS Results

Special Education Student Listings

We have sent each school three copies of the Participation in Standardized Testing by Special Education Students listing. This list provides the testing status of each special education student at your school, as determined by the ARD Committee. Since the ARD Committee made these decisions, any changes will have to go through the committee and be reported to ORE on a scanner document.

Public Service Announcements

We will be making new television public service announcements (PSA's) for this year's testing. Please send us names of local personalities who would be appropriate for a junior high audience.

Grade Equivalent Scores

This year we will be reporting students' test scores in both percentile rank and grade equivalent (GE) scores to the schools. The label for the parent/student brochure will contain only percentile rank scores.

A training session on percentile and grade equivalent scores will be arranged with each junior high in the spring. You will receive details later.

1983-84 Testing Dates

Tentative ITBS junior high testing dates for the 1983-84 school year are as follows:

February 14 - 16 (Make-ups: February 17-24)

The Building Test Coordinators agreed that these were the best dates, even though Valentine's Day is the first scheduled testing day.

Exemplary Procedures

We know that each school has particular methods of organizing the ITBS administration. Please send us your exemplary procedures (ones which really help you get the job done effectively and efficiently) so that we might share them with the other schools to help the administrations run even more smoothly.

Errors on Class Lists from Data Services

Please be cautious in using test scores printed on class lists sent out by Data Services. An error in their programming caused "RT04 WT04 LT04 MT04" to be printed for some students in the place of their actual scores or if they had no scores. ORE is working with Data Services to correct their problem prior to January, 1983.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

Your Scores In . . .

AISD Junior High Schools

School Year 1982-83

You recently took the IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS (ITBS). This brochure is to help you and your parents understand why you were given this test, what your scores mean, and how the test scores will be used to help provide the best instructional program for you next year. If you still have questions about your test scores after reading this brochure, please meet with your teachers or school counselor. They will be happy to discuss your test scores with you.

YOU TOOK THESE ITBS TESTS:	THE SKILLS TESTED WERE:
Vocabulary	Your knowledge of the meaning of words.
Reading Comprehension	Your understanding of what you have read.
Language Skills Spelling Capitalization Punctuation Usage	Your ability to recognize appropriate spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.
Work-Study Skills Visual Materials Reference Materials	Your ability to interpret charts, maps, and graphs, and to use reference materials.
Mathematics Math Concepts Math Problems Math Computation	Your understanding of mathematical theory and your ability to do various types of problems.

WHY WERE YOU TESTED?

When we want to know how we are doing in anything, we usually find something to compare ourselves to—runners in training for the Olympics might compare their practice efforts to world-record time; dieters might use a chart giving recommended weights for individuals of the same sex and height. Testing is one way for you, your teachers, and your parents to know how you are doing in school. The ITBS is given to students across the country. Your scores then help you know how you are doing in acquiring basic skills in comparison to these students across the country.

Your test scores will be used to make decisions about which reading, math, and language arts classes would be best for you to take. For eighth graders, these scores may mean that you have met AISD's high school graduation minimum competency requirements.

Your ITBS scores also help the principal know more about how all the students in your school are achieving. Other administrators and the School Board use the scores to help them understand the achievement levels of students in AISD as a whole.

HOW ACCURATE ARE THESE TEST SCORES?

In most cases, these test scores are a good estimation of how you perform in school. But these scores only estimate how well you have learned the skills tested. They can be affected by a number of things, such as which courses you have taken and how you were feeling on the day you took the test.

Test scores are one piece of information which you, your teachers, and your parents should use to judge your school progress. Many other things should also be used to measure your success in school, such as your grades, your enthusiasm for courses, and how well you can use skills you have learned.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION MINIMUM COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

This section of the brochure explains the high school graduation requirements which affect you. **PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.** If you have questions not answered by the information provided here, talk to your school counselor.

AISD HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION MINIMUM COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

AISD has a number of requirements students must meet before they can graduate from high school. In addition to earning the required number of units of credit and passing the required courses, two of these requirements involve your ITBS scores.

Reading: **Students will be required to demonstrate at least a ninth-grade competence in reading or place on file a letter signed by parents or guardian acknowledging that the student proposes to graduate without achieving a ninth-grade level in reading.**

Mathematics: **Students will be required to demonstrate at least a ninth-grade competence in mathematics or place on file a letter signed by parent or guardian acknowledging that the student proposes to graduate without achieving a ninth-grade competence in mathematics.**

AISD Board Policy 5127

HOW CAN YOU MEET THESE TWO MINIMUM COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS?

The first chance you have to meet these competency requirements is in the eighth grade. If you are an eighth grader and your raw score for the Reading Total is at least 61 and your Math Total raw score is at least 67 you have already met the competency requirements.

IF YOU DO NOT MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS IN EIGHTH GRADE, WHAT THEN?

You can also meet these requirements in high school by making an average ninth-grade score on the high school achievement test given every year. There are special high school courses you can take to help you meet these requirements if you have not met them by the time you have taken your required language arts and math courses. Your school counselor can tell you more about these courses.

If you have not met the minimum competency requirements by the end of the twelfth grade, you may stay in school until you do meet them, or you may request that your parents or guardian give permission for you to graduate without meeting them.

WHY DOES AISD HAVE THESE REQUIREMENTS?

The minimum competency requirements were begun to make certain that every student who graduates from an AISD school has the minimum skills necessary to function in our society.

These requirements are the minimum requirements in reading and math. Every student is still expected to learn as much as possible. Most Students will far exceed these minimum levels.

Cover design by Reginald Strickland, student, LBJ High School. Typeset and printed by students at Johnston High School.

WHAT DO YOUR SCORES MEAN?

You will find your ITBS scores on the bottom of the next page. There are 15 scores for junior high students. These include the totals for reading, language skills, work-study skills, and mathematics.

The ITBS is a standardized test. This means that each student who takes the test receives the same directions and the same time limits. Because the tests are standardized, we can make estimates about how AISD students who took the test compare with students across the country in the nationwide reference group. This reference group is thousands of students who took the ITBS in 1978 in each grade level from all areas of the country.

For example, you can see that Susan Jones made a percentile rank score of 59 on the Vocabulary Test. This means that she scored higher on the Vocabulary Test than did 59% of the students in Susan's grade who were part of the nationwide reference group. Therefore, for every 100 students in the nationwide group, Susan's score was higher than 59 of them.

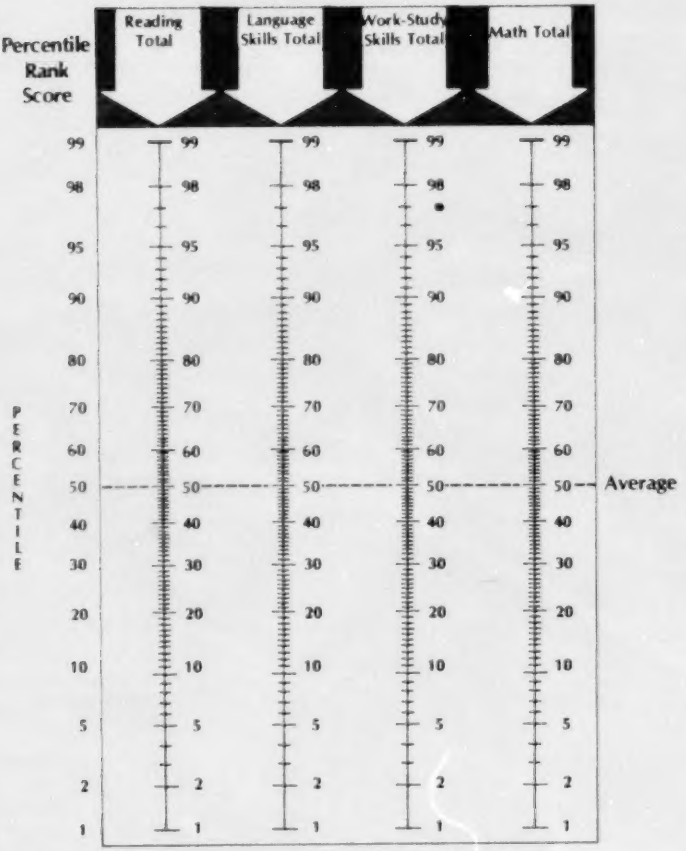
For each grade level, a percentile rank score of 50 is the middle score for all the students in the nationwide reference group. The highest possible percentile rank score is 99; the lowest is 1.

Susan's mathematics scores are marked with an "s" in the row labeled **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE.** This S means that Susan's teacher noticed something during the mathematics testing period which made her think Susan's scores may not be accurate. In this case, Susan lost a contact lens during the mathematics tests and could not read well. The school counselor has a record of all teachers' reasons for thinking any scores may be inaccurate.

4562103	Susan Jones									252		2/83	14		7	8
ITBS																
SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE													S	S	S	S
PERCENTILE RANK SCORE		59	58	55	46	79	52	49	57	56	62	58	1	5	5	1

**These are applicable only in grades 4-6.

YOUR SCORES ON THE IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS



PASTE YOUR SCORES HERE

YOU MAY WISH TO MARK YOUR TEST SCORES ON THE GRAPH ABOVE.